

# *Report*

## Jimmy Carter National Historic Site

### ■ 1.0 Site Description

The Jimmy Carter National Historic Site (NHS), located in Plains, Georgia, entails the following properties:

- The boyhood home of Jimmy Carter (see Figure 1), the 39th President of the United States.
- The high school President and Mrs. Carter attended (see Figure 2). The former school has been converted into a museum and visitor's center. The museum and visitor's center opened in 1996.
- The Carter family compound where President and Mrs. Carter presently reside. This area of the NHS is closed to the public and access is controlled by the Secret Service.
- Plains Depot which served as the 1976 Carter Presidential Campaign Headquarters. The depot has been maintained as the campaign headquarters.
- A five-mile trail through the NHS containing a series of 52 questions about information presented/provided in other exhibits around the site.

**Figure 1. Jimmy Carter – 39<sup>th</sup> President**



**Figure 2. Presidential Museum**



- The Jimmy Carter farm (see Figure 3). The farm on which President Carter grew up is currently being restored and will be open to the public in the summer of 2000. The original farm was 360 acres, of which approximately 17 acres are maintained by the NPS. Periodically, President Carter can be found at the farm. The farm is located approximately three miles from the museum.

**Figure 3. Jimmy Carter Boyhood Farm**



The Jimmy Carter NHS is open to the public year-round, except for Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Visitation to the Jimmy Carter NHS in 1998 was approximately 50,000 persons. Visitation of the site includes a high percentage of school children on field trips (6,000 to 10,000 per year). Another key group are those persons passing through the area on their way to/from Florida. Site visitation generally peaks in April through May and in the fall due to travelers going to Florida.

Site visitors generally travel by automobile between each of the areas located within the boundaries of the NHS. The boyhood home, museum and the campaign headquarters are within walking distance (a pedestrian trip made routinely by the Superintendent), but patrons generally drive. This requires parking to be provided at each site. Generally, finding a parking space is not a concern at the facilities.

## ■ 2.0 Existing ATS

A private shuttle (15-passenger vans) has been operated through a permit from the NPS. In 1999, however, shuttle service was discontinued because of a lack of revenue. An interesting feature of the shuttle service was that it provided access to the Carter family compound, which is generally not accessible by the public.

No other Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS), with the exception of the interpretive trail, exist on site.

## ■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Most of the destinations associated with the Jimmy Carter NHS are located within Plains and are access using collector/arterial corridors. Sidewalks are located adjacent to most of the uses.

ATS needs identified include:

- Rehabilitation and shoulder improvements to the access route to the boyhood farm. The farm site is accessed via a narrow county highway. The condition of the highway is poor. In addition to providing access to the farm, the route is the primary access to a composting site. Material is transported to the composting site by semi. The mixture of heavy vehicle traffic, tour buses and RVs on the access route is creating a potential safety hazard. No specific accident analysis of the corridor has been completed.
- A shuttle system, operated by the NPS, has been discussed. The priority of site development, which will be essentially complete when the farm is opened to the public in 2000, has taken precedent over studying a shuttle. No specific system details were available.
- Construction of a bike lane in conjunction with roadway improvements to the farm access route. President Carter is an avid biker and generally travels to the farm by bike. The farm is located about three miles from the museum. Thus, it is in close proximity. The level of heavy commercial traffic on the route would likely warrant considering shoulder improvements if bike access is encouraged.
- There have been discussions of providing excursion train service between Cordele and Plains and the boyhood farm. The concept has been discussed by the Georgia Southwest Railroad. The NPS is not an advocate of the excursion train concept. The primary concern is the potential economic viability. The route between Cordele and Plains is not a particularly scenic route (straight and flat). The excursion train concept has the support of President and Mrs. Carter and the Georgia Director of Transportation. No specifics of the concept were available.

## ■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

The principle ATS need is likely paving the county route between Plains and the Carter boyhood farm. The farm is expected to increase visitation and will be closely linked with the other facilities. Thus, many of the museum, boyhood home and library visitors will also travel to the farm. With the relatively short distance between the main facilities and the farm, a bike lane (eight-foot shoulder as a minimum), should be considered along with the roadway improvements. The NPS has worked closely with the county, however, and limited local funds are available for significant roadway improvements.

## ■ 5.0 Bibliography

Internet Site: <http://www.recreation.gov/detail.cfm?ID=727>. Information printed November 22, 1999.

Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/jica>. Information printed November 22, 1999.

## ■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Fred Boyles, Superintendent, Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. Telephone interview. November 24, 1999